

9/26/23

Members of the Health Policy Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to share my personal experience and offer my overwhelming support of HB 4101 regarding the speech language pathology Temporary Educational licensing.

My name is Kelly Miller. I am a professional singer, a voice teacher, and am now a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP). Before becoming an SLP, I was making my living as a singer. Then in 2014, the husband passed away suddenly, leaving me a 36-year-old widow and now single mother of a then 9-year-old son with autism. My job as a singer involved too much travel, so I started my journey to becoming an SLP. I went to school part-time as I still had to work to support myself and my son. I finally got my degree after eight years.

I accepted a part-time position for my clinical fellowship year (CFY) with the intention of completing my 1,260 required hours in approximately 18 months, which would have been in alignment with the rules as they were when I entered into my graduate program in 2019. I received an email from LARA informing me that I needed to renew my Temporary Educational License and when I reached out to the licensing bureau to do so, they informed me that I was no longer allowed to renew the Temporary License due to a law that had been changed just before I graduated. LARA made it clear that there would be no extensions or renewals for any reason.

The American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) gives you four years from your graduation date to earn your certification, and once you begin submitting CFY hours (which I had), you have 24-months to complete them. I had only 240 hours left, but I had already used one year so I didn't have time to wait out the unpredictable and often long legislative process in the *hopes* that I'd be able to finish. I'd have to leave the state of Michigan if I wanted to complete my CFY, get ASHA certification, and obtain full licensing to work in my home state. I ended up getting a temporary license in Ohio, so I left my son and my new husband and stepdaughter for the whole summer (nine weeks in total). Since I'd now have to shut down my private voice studio during that time, I had no income other than my CFY wages which would be spent on cost-of-living during my relocation - which was fully at my

own expense. To save some money, I borrowed my sisters pop-up camper and lived at the KOA Campground in Dayton which was 30 mins. away from the two facilities I was working at in order to get the full-time hours I'd need to finish before the end of summer. I also had to commute home (a 5 hour drive) each weekend to fulfill singing contracts. My total expenses were almost \$5,000. Now that I'm home, I *still* can't work as an SLP as my Temporary License is expired and It will take until November before the paperwork and licensing goes through.

Working a full-time CFY position was not possible for me. My CFY hourly wage, alone, was not enough to support myself and my son - even if I were full-time status. Further, I worked hard to earn my adjunct faculty position at Western Michigan University and build my private voice studio. I should not be *expected* to have to give them both up in order to complete my clinical fellowship. If it had not been for the fact that I was able to earn my degree on a part-time basis, becoming an SLP would have never been an option for me at all, and I know I'm not the only person who has similar circumstances.

The 12-consecutive-months period for the Temporary Educational License makes it necessary for someone to work in a full-time position in order to complete the required hours because it leaves no room for 'life' to intervene at any time. The clock doesn't stop even if you get pregnant, get sick, have a medical condition, get divorced, have to relocate, your employer can't get you enough hours, you lose your CFY position, or any of the other countless reasons that one may have there CFY interrupted. The rules, as they exist, are unreasonable and unrealistic for many clinical fellows. If I had not been blessed with the opportunity and the resources to complete my CFY out of state, the degree that I spent nearly a decade of my life earning would have been useless. It is my sincere hope that HB 4101 is passed and written into law swiftly and prevent any other future Michigan SLPs from having to go through what I did.

Thank you for your time, today.

Sincerely,

Kelly Miller